

# LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
WORKER

That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic. - James Connally



In search of . . .  
**JOHN  
FRANCIS  
O'DONNELL**



# BANKRUPTCY OF

# "LEFT

# WING"

# Politics



WILD GEESE

Cacklecalling,  
Wild geese  
In sudden aerial flurry,  
Windspreads swishing,  
Climb away in skeins  
On old flyways,  
Through cloud spaces,  
In skywastes,  
Out from our city, once,  
With their drums thrum - thrumming  
With their flags flap fluttering  
Marched the ranks of Sarsfield's men  
Flocking to France and thundering battles.  
These "Wild Geese" left, - all remember them...

Others have left  
Have gone unnoticed  
Have left without  
Flurry or swish or drum,  
Have gone in their thousands  
Have quietly departed  
Have taken wing  
Unmourned, absung,  
No ancient callings -  
No martial urges  
Have forced their flight  
Towards other lands,  
But their feeding ground  
Being grey and barren  
Promised little  
To their willing hands,  
One way tickets  
In empty wallets  
Heavy cases  
Leadern speech  
Their migration  
Is only echoed  
When sea birds scream  
By a wave washed beach



In "TUZO, WHITELAW AND THE TERROR IN NORTHERN IRELAND", Paddy Devlin writes of the Northern Ireland Labour Party: "Labour failed down the years to create the positive socialist dynamic which the North so badly needed... by its continuing support of the constitutional position it has been an ally of the Unionist cause rather than an enemy." (*Ulster's Political Parties, July 1971*).

The PD shares Mr. Devlin's view that it is impossible to be a socialist and support the link with Britain: "We in the PD believe that a party cannot be both unionist and socialist—or even really radical and unionist. Unionism from its very inception has meant Protestant Ascendancy rule—it means discrimination, narrow mindedness and bigotry. That legacy is almost impossible to shake off" (*Unfree Citizen, March 1973*). In their comments on the White Paper, they say "The anti-Imperialists must, regardless of the White Paper, maintain the high level of struggle, for only one solution can begin to satisfy the aspirations of the Irish working class. That is a united Ireland, opening up the way to a Socialist Republic." In case anyone is in doubt as to the continued existence of these aspirations: "the anti-Unionist people can now see that they (the NILP and Alliance Party) are nothing more than watered-down Unionists, with nothing new to offer them but a form of 'power sharing' in a new 'reformed' Stormont. This the people will not have—this they proved—by massive abstention from voting in the farcical border poll." This faith that all the abstentions were protest votes (in other words that, if the Catholic population hadn't been told to abstain there would have been a 100% turnout) is shared by James Stewart of the Communist Party: "The boycott of the recent Border Poll demonstrated that over 41% of the population in 'Northern Ireland' are not prepared to accept the return of a Unionist oligarchy". The Provisional IRA congratulated the 42% on their "magnificent show of solidarity". (*Unity, March 24, 1973*).

It seems strange that popular movements representing "the aspirations of the Irish working class" should have to resort to such pieces of trickery to invent for themselves any sort of popular backing. And it is strange and sad to see so many "socialist", "working class" parties refusing to seriously examine why despite the supposed fact that "a party cannot be both unionist and socialist" the great majority of the working class in Ulster support the British connection. The Officials (described by P. Devlin as "social revolutionaries") complain that "the White Paper guaranteed Britain's continued presence in the North for as long as the majority there are in favour of the Union. So terrible is this burden that is imposed upon the poor majority, that when Britain leaves, it must

"pledge itself to make economic compensation so that the standard of living of the working class people will not be adversely affected." (*Irish Times, March 26*)

The tragedy of the situation is that the claim of these people to be "Socialist" is taken seriously. After all, the bourgeoisie have no reason to expose them: if socialism is discredited in the eyes of the working class, that's all to the good. Apart from ourselves, the only "socialist" grouping that is not anti-Partitionist is the Northern Ireland Labour Party (Loyalist Assoc. of Workers and the Ulster Defence Ass. have talked about forming a party to serve the interests of the working Class but have now disappeared into the aggressively bourgeois Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party). The NILP is unionist for purely pragmatic reasons: it has not been able to explain coherently why the Anti-Partitionist Socialists are wrong: it has had no more success than they have had in explaining why the great majority of class in Northern Ireland should wish to keep the link with Britain: but it is fully aware that this is the case, and that its continued existence as a political party depends upon its recognition of this fact. Since we feel that no policy on any issue should be adopted by the working class without the class fully understanding why it is adopting that policy, we do not feel that the pragmatic approach of the NILP is sufficient.

To distract attention away from the National question the NILP, like the ICTU have attempted to concentrate on economic issues. In their 'Political Policy in Northern Ireland', the Irish Congress of Trade Unions declare: "The concern of the community for its members is fundamental. The questions relating to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, which divide our community are secondary." So we have to organize the resources of 'the community' to fully meet the needs of the people living there, without knowing which community it is that we are organising.

It is the working class that have suffered most from the present troubles, yet the political leadership of the working class has either been reactionary Nationalist (the IRAs, the CPI, PD, SDLP, LAW, ULAC) or ineffectively benign (NILP, ICTU). It is to the deep shame of these so-called Working Class organisations that they have left it to a Tory government to explain in an objective and rational manner in both the Green Paper and the White Paper—the principles which must underlie the democratic solution which the working class needs.

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# Returning

## Impressions

by Kevin O'Connor

You've been away for ten years and in the first months back impressions register furiously. You are sharply aware of the changes from the Ireland of the bleak 1950's . . . of how the kids and teenagers in 'gear' could be in Manchester or Boston, of how gentler with women are the young men, from those of your generation. Of how Dublin's Grafton Street, on a Saturday night, spills forth with an affluence and a style of living that is unfamiliar and unexpected.

You note, too, how much more Continental Dublin is than London—in the essential spirit of the people . . . random, haphazard, seizing the moment now rather than the mechanised tribulation of the mass of English, for whom birth, copulation and almost death itself seem matters of calculated decision.

Coming from mechanised London, Dublin appears Continental in many other aspects—in the random of traffic, in the absence of nameplates on street corners, in the bustle of the bus-conductors . . . and no least from the periodic pissours along the quays.

The capital also retains a strong post-colonial image. There isn't the previously-familiar Marks and Spencer but Dunnes Stores gear is uncannily similar; de Valera rides to engagements in a vintage Rolls-Royce—and sixty per cent of the population of the metropolis devotedly tune into the television life-style of Britain. So you're back to a mini-England with a Continental flavour.

You rapidly find, however, that the old Ireland you left moulders uneasily underneath the surface liberalism. When you go flat-hunting, you notice preponderance of single-beds in the flats of Rathmines and Ranelagh—relics of fearsome landladies and of a puritan Ireland which, though poet John Montague may versify otherwise, is startlingly obvious by British standards.

But then Britain, of course, is rapidly becoming as sexually liberal as Sweden. And not only sexually liberal, but more and more humanitarian in its treatment of the old, the young and the "underprivileged". And you wonder if there's a link between sexual liberalism and liberal humanism—if one helps produce the other. Particularly when you notice how many Irish letters-to-the-Editor are strident utterances on the sexually-related subjects of divorce, abortion, contraception. But little, proportionately, on the lousy modern slums of Ballymun and Ballyfermot or on the antiquated penal system.

You realise that the birth-pangs of the New State are still twitching; that the Irish are still only learning to administer and govern—that fifty-years of self-government is a heady whiff

which has still not settled down to competent confidence (Ballymun is a monument to the peasant assumption that concrete and piped-water, en masse, is a sort of success.) Equally, of course, the very existence of Ballymun has produced a breed of earnest young social worker whose essential humanism lacks a socialist dimension.

Some portents of hope strike one on return. Gone—for the most part—are the knots of the unemployed by street corners, the wasting men whose frayed suits became shiny from leaning against walls to observe day follow day . . . without hope. Gone, too, is much of the sexual ignorance prevalent in your time; the young marrieds now tend to space out their children . . . with a greater liberation for the women, more time for thought and, inevitably, higher jinks in suburbia.

There seems to be an enormous gap now between the 'generations'—between the under-twenties and the under-thirties. While the gap between the under-30's (roughly) and the middle-aged is a yawning chasm of social change that has left many of the middle-aged bewildered. Joe Foyle and John D. Sheridan pontificate to a near-senile audience . . . while outside of the letter-columns of the 'Press' and 'Independent' looms a burgeoning audience of the young who read 'High Times' and 'Nikki' and 'Gun'. They are, in their own phrase, 'into' sex and self-confidence in a way that few people over twenty-five can appreciate.

One reason that few over twenty-five can appreciate the changes is that Irish society is top-heavy with the influence—and attitudes—of the middle-aged. And because these attitudes were moulded in the immediate post-Civil War years, when the prevailing intent was that of producing an assembly-line brand of Irish Catholic Nationalist, a hefty proportion of the young now find themselves totally out of sympathy with their parents' generation.

For to judge from random visits to Sunday Churches, the Mass attendance is mainly composed of the middle-aged—with occasional flocks of the young-marrieds dashing in-and-out for a brief alleviation of leftover guilt. Many of the young are notable only by their absence—and they are the generation who grew-up in the affluent sixties, who had the benefit of a more liberal education and of television.

They are the middle class generation who read Edna O'Brien (condemned by most of their parents) and on John McGahern (fired from his teaching post for publishing a novel on a favourite Irish bogey—masturbation). They are a

generation with a greater economic independence than their parents ever knew.

More pertinently, they are the generation whose attitudes are sufficiently liberal to have tasted the pleasures of an alternative society to the rigid one which their parents grew up in. And moved now by the Ulster horrors into a severe questioning of their own nationalistic/religious inheritance many are unlikely to perpetuate that tradition.

Neither is so-called 'materialism' the only alternative. Old attitudes die hard. It is pertinent to note, for instance, that among students at the Higher Institute of Education in Limerick—very much the prototype of future student life-style in Ireland—the first political organisation formed was that of the Official Sinn Fein. After the widespread disillusionment with the Labour Party, the policies of Sinn Fein contain elements of powerful appeal for some of the young.

But it is only a suitable irony that the inheritance of conservative Catholic thinking should have resulted in a growing rejection of the traditional national concepts, and this new situation could lead the way for some sort of socialistic thinking for the future. Certainly the underlying socio-economic ingredients which in other countries have produced an independent radical consciousness now exist here. Briefly, these are:—

The industrial growth which took place in the mid-sixties and which has produced the first industrial working-class in the Republic. The consciousness of that class is being fledglingly expressed in the expansion of organisations such as the National Tenants Organisation and market for a tabloid weekly paper. While the rooting of common rumour about the profiteering of property speculators and native-born financiers has produced a resentment previously directed against 'the foreigner'. But now increasingly against the native establishment of Church and State. Both these institutions are the object of more on-the-ground criticism than ever existed in the Ireland of the fifties. The pronouncements from the twin pulpits of Christ-and-Caesar are greeted with a new irreverence.

If there is one recurring refrain that has sounded above all other, it is *change* . . . people testify to it on all sides. The middle-aged are a little bewildered by it; their spokesmen attack 'permissiveness' . . . and the young chant back: 'do your own thing'. The changes, however, are slow—and are dictated as much by the benevolence of the middle-aged as by the new life-styles of the young. The Judiciary, Censorship, Education, The Media are top-heavy with the middle-aged. While the few in influential positions who are young are aware that an element of their survival is to be duly deferential to their elders in power. Hence the constant outflow to Britain and America of the talented and impatient.

But even that tradition is in the process of change, with the decrease of economically-enforced migration. Some figures even suggest that an increasing number—conservatively put at around 13,000 last year, are returning to Ireland from Britain.

The Ireland they return to is one which has changed considerably in their absence. And it will be an Ireland of even greater change in the '70's.

For socialists, the challenge of that 'change' is clear. As well as supporting the move to a more open and democratic society they must also foster an awareness of the present inequalities so that the working-class of this country will use its power in bringing about a real alternative, a change long overdue . . .

In search of . . .

PART TWO

by Jim Kemmy

# John Francis O'Donnell

*"Not a soul, observe you, knows me, not a hand a friend will yield,  
Would they know, if to the landmarks all around them I appealed?  
Know me! If I died this minute, dig for me the Potter's field."*

("Limerick Town"—J. F. O'Donnell)

## THE POET'S LIMERICK

In the first few years of the second half of the nineteenth century, a group of poets came together in Limerick. Despite his age, the boy-poet, John Francis O'Donnell, was the leading member of this coterie. The Bard of Thomond, Michael Hogan, in his unpublished memoirs, describes his fellow-poets in characteristic caustic vein:

*I became associated with a small host of literary young fellows in Limerick—all votaries of the Muse and rivals for her favour. The most distinguished of these was John O'Donnell, who afterwards figured in London under the non de plume Caviare. I was often amused to hear some of those critical cockroaches biting at the loftiest literary planets of the age—I thought such pigmy presumption ought to be well chastised, but nothing can stop the venom of envious hearts. Those paltry, important candidates for Parnassian distinction were great by little degrees at scribbling, quoting, rhyming, reciting and criticising.*

The year 1854 was an important one for O'Donnell. As well as starting work as a reporter with the Limerick paper, *The Munster News*, he also contributed twelve poems and an article to the *Limerick Reporter*. The article, titled *Street Ballads*, is a notable one for a seventeen-year-old and is perhaps an example of the critical style which Hogan so roundly condemned. Published in September 1854, the article also shows how much O'Donnell was already influenced by a strong nationalistic attitude.

*The national spirit which animated the fiery lays of our fathers is perished. The most insipid doggerel attracts the attention of the crowd, with an amount of fascination which none of the wild lyrics of Moore or Davis ever possessed. Our sense is shocked, our notions horrified, our 'evening walks' made hideous by the accumulated mass of unmeaning nonsense, nightly sung and circulated to millions under the title of ballads. Grossness, lewdness, and obscenity are the prominent features of these amiable specimens of Irish talent. In our alleys, and byways, the fetid room, and the lordly chamber, the most absurd 'compositions' are received and chanted; while everything which contains a spark of that pride which would cherish our national glory, or elevate the intellect of a nation, is inadmissible. . . . But it is not the millions who receive these productions, that are alone to be held responsible. A set of dotards, hoary-headed old wretches, the authors of these profanations of poetry, should, in our opinion, receive the punishment with which some of them threatened our grandmothers, i.e.—'to smother them in a barrel of tobacco.'*

Another one of this group of poets was William Colopy, who left Limerick for America in the

Summer of 1854. *The Limerick Reporter* recorded in August of that year: "The friends and admirers of William Colopy, whose poetical genius is inviolably identified with the recollections of his native city, Limerick, will be happy to learn of his safe arrival in the land of George Washington, where a brighter destiny awaits him than attended his career in the land of his birth".

In September, the *Limerick Reporter* published a poem sent by Colopy from New York. The poem, titled, *To John F. O'Donnell*, is a friend's poetic farewell to the "young Minstrel" who remained behind.

*A cloud above my destiny, and anguish in my soul!*

*I saw the waste of waters between us foaming roll;  
I saw the dear old 'City of Sieges' fade away.  
Like evening's cloud-built battlements that melt  
at close of day.*

*But hope still hover'd o'er me, her spirit was divine;  
I knew thy heart and faith would live, responsive  
beat to mine;*

*I knew the place of battles would still preserve its  
name—*

*Thy youthful genius there to guard, the temple of  
its fame.*

*When Sarsfield died at Landen, thy star of glory  
fell.*

*From Luma's 'Stone of Treaty' pale Freedom  
sigh'd farewell;*

*And in her fane, oh! friend of youth, a lyre she  
left to thee.*

*Inspired to sing the deeds, the names, and glories  
of the free.*

*Long may'st thou live to sing their deeds, thy  
city's hope and pride.*

*Strength, eloquence, and fire, and truth in thy  
wild song allied;*

*Leaving a tale of dimless fame to other bards to  
tell—*

*Friend of my soul, across the waves, I breathe this  
fond farewell.*

When O'Donnell at the age of seventeen, started work as a reporter with the *Munster News*, he achieved his much-sought ambition to earn his living as a writer. After about two years

with the Limerick paper he made the first of many moves in his working life. He went to Clonmel to act as sub-editor of the *Tipperary Examiner*.

While O'Donnell never again worked in Limerick, his first nineteen years in the city were a formative influence on him and on his writings. His national, religious and political beliefs were all shaped by this background. The manner in which he regularly returned to his native city in the themes of his later poems clearly shows his warm feeling for the home of his fathers.

So, despite his physical separation from Limerick, O'Donnell could still lay claim to the poetic title conferred on him by his exiled fellow-poet, William Colopy, of being "thy city's hope and pride". In his poetry he remained true to his friend's farewell wish "to sing the deeds, the names and the glories of the free". In one of his best poems, *On the Rampart: Limerick*, O'Donnell fondly recalls his memories of the city and its people.

*St. Mary's in the evening air,  
Springs up austere and olden;  
Two sides its steeple grey and bare;  
The sides with sunset golden.  
The bells roll out, the bells roll back,  
For lusty knaves are ringing,  
Deep in the chancel, red and black,  
The white robed boys are singing.  
The sexton loiters by the gate  
With eyes more blue than hyssop,  
A black-green skull-cap on his pate,  
And all his mouth a-gossip.  
This is the town beside the flood—  
The walls the Shannon washes,  
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood,  
To blossom into ashes.*

*The streets are quaint, red-bricked, antique,  
The topmost storeys curving,  
With, here and there, a slanted leak,  
Through which the light falls swerving  
The angry sudden light falls down  
On path and middle parquet,  
On shapes, weird as the ancient town,  
And faces fresh for market,  
They shout, they chatter, disappear,  
Like imps that shake the valance  
At midnight, when the clock ticks queer,  
And time has lost its balance.  
This is the town beside the flood  
Which past its bastions dashes,  
Where Freedom's seed was sown in blood  
To blossom into ashes.*

Another poem, *The Treaty Stone*, his last work to be published in the *Nation* before his death, describes the famous landmark:

*Where Shannon's waters fresh and free,  
With mountain leaflets strown,  
Sweeps past the Bridge of History  
Stands Limerick's Treaty Stone  
Its crest is dented by the storm,  
Its base is green with rime  
Yet worn and frail  
It tells the tale  
Of Ireland's fighting time;  
Of Ireland's faithful fighting time  
When under Sarsfield's guns  
The tattered banner flew above  
Her proudly marshalled sons.*

In yet another of his poems, *Limerick*, O'Donnell's mind again returns to the history of his native city, as he reflects on the Siege of Limerick:

*As I pace each still and storied street,  
The pageants of forgotten days arise;  
I feel the tumult and the gathering heat,*

I fear the measured fall of warrior feet,  
I see the banners in the narrow skies.  
Cries and rejoicings burthen the warm air—  
Some foe has perished, some good deed has  
been done,  
Some toil has harnessed comfort of the sun,  
And poured a moment's light upon despair.

Spill blood and sacrifice availed thee not,  
Dear city of the tributary wave!  
Shattered and blackened by destroying shot,  
Thy very shape a smoking blot,  
Thy bastions, charnels; and thy moat, a grave.  
Let Ireton sound his trumpets long and loud—  
He has achieved his stubborn purpose well.  
Put out the lights and toll the passing bell—  
The head of valiant Limerick is bowed!

So flashed thy story by me, city mine,  
As leaning over Thomond's memoried bridge,  
I saw, gold-fired, upon the peaceful ridge,  
The banner, and the spears of autumn shine,  
And heard behind me the town's murmurous tune,  
And watched afar, all violent, or bare  
The sea-declining hills of breezy Clare  
And deep in heaven, the shadow of the moon.

O'Donnell's stint in Clonmel seems to have been as uneventful as the rest of his life. Writing about the poet and this period in his life, "Owen Roe", in *The Shamrock* of February 24th, 1877, stated:

He made a remarkable hit . . . having become sub-editor of the Tipperary Examiner, of which Mr. Hartnett was the editor. Now this paper, being a provincial one, was not a very remarkable periodical; nor did it possess a great influence outside the bounds of that . . . county. But the position

upon its staff satiated the cravings of O'Donnell's ambition for the nonce. He remained contented with his position for a time—knowing well that the highest rung of the ladder cannot be reached at one bound; that one must begin at the lowest . . . His contributions to this paper at this, the first stage of his career as a litterateur, were altogether barren of any interest. And it could not be otherwise. Country papers are more or less taken up with events of a purely local nature; and their leading articles are generally directed against local abuses, or the petty tyranny of local magnates . . . And to the general run of country newspapers the Tipperary Examiner was no exception. Why O'Donnell contented himself here in this comparatively obscure position we think we have sufficiently explained before.

But there was another reason "why O'Donnell contented himself here in this comparatively obscure position". While his stay in Clonmel may not have been an important time in his career as a writer, it did change his personal life. It was here he met his wife, a Miss Jones, who lived in the town.

There were three children in the O'Donnell family, two girls and a boy, but little else is known about his marriage. His friend, Richard Dowling has written:

Concerning his domestic life I know absolutely nothing . . . I always understood from O'Donnell that his home was a most happy one, and that it had exercised no commanding influence on him as an author.

O'Donnell's poems may, however, give some clues to his "domestic life" at this time. In *The Turnstile* he wrote:

There's a echoe that comes from the dusk of the paddock—

The echoes of feet that are tripping and walking,  
There's a murmur that creeps through the heart of the pasture,

O love, is it you, or the daisies, are talking?  
'Tis she, for the wild mint, scarce crushed by her footstep,

Gives out all its odour—that's all it can give her—  
And the stile that I've sat by since six in the evening,  
Turns round, as it does, by itself to receive her.

Come hither, come hither,  
'Tis midsummer weather;

Now answer me this, by the round moon above me,  
Do you?—well, after all, what's the use of being talking?

Sure you wouldn't come hither if you didn't love me?

And in *My Jack*, he explores the joy of reunion after "separation's bitter pain":

The dream is fact; we too again  
By long beloved hedges walk.

And separation's bitter pain

Dies in the music of your talk,

The stifled pang, the injured sense,

The shame of doubt, the wrong of sin,

Turn into benedictions in

Your clear sun-lighted innocence,

Look, there's the sun behind the wood,

The clouds one puff of golden gloom;

Now for the night's divinest mood—

Low laughter and the lamp-lit room.

After about three years in Clonmel, O'Donnell looked about for a change. He was attracted to London, and, in 1860, he duly set out to ply his trade in the English capital.

(To be Continued)

## A HERO OF OUR TIME

## THE ATTEMPT TO BRIBE Mickey Earls

### SCENE:

A Ballynanty Corporation house in which Councillor Mickey Earls, an unemployed docker, lives.

### TIME:

A mid-March evening 1973. Alderman Steve Coughlan, T.D., and two of his supporters approach the house and are admitted to the sitting room.

Earls: Well, boys, what can I do for you?

Coughlan: I only came out to help you to mark your Senate Election papers.

Earls: What's all the rush about? There's plenty of time for that.

Coughlan: Oh, I'm not worried about you, Mickey, I know you won't let us down.

Malone: (Coughlan supporter). Well, Mickey, did you consider what I was asked to put to you?

Earls: What was that, Ambrose?

Malone: You know . . . about resigning your City Council seat . . . Kiernan has the money—£25 or £30—there in his pocket. You can write your letter of resignation to the City Manager and the Mayor, and Kiernan can then be co-opted in your place.

Earls: No, Ambrose . . . I can tell you here and now that I am not having any of this. The people of Ballynanty elected me to the City Council, and a bribe would never buy me . . . This offer is an insult to me . . .

Coughlan: Don't take it like that, Mickey . . . and I want to assure you that I only came here to

make sure that you filled in your Senate Election papers . . . We meant no harm . . . We thought we were only acting for your own good . . .

Earls: Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes, Steve. You can't buy me.

Malone: You're taking it wrong, Mickey . . . You are taking it up all wrong . . .

Earls: (standing up). Good-night! Good-night, now! And don't ever knock on my door again!

\* \* \* \*

### SCENE:

The conclusion of a City Council meeting.

### TIME:

9th April, 1973. Three Council members, Alderman Steve Coughlan, Alderman Mick Lipper and Councillor Mickey Earls emerge talking in loud voices, and begin to walk slowly towards O'Connell Street.

Coughlan: There are some very bad rumours going around this town about me. I'm supposed to have tried to bribe Mickey Earls to resign his Council seat.

Lipper: I have heard these statements. They are very damaging charges against any Deputy, and if they are untrue they should be contradicted. Could you throw any light on how these rumours got around, Mickey? Are they true or false?

Earls: I'll tell you how all this thing happened,

Mick. The night your father's remains were being removed to the chapel, Steve Coughlan asked me to travel in Malone's car. During the car journey, the remark was made that I wasn't too active for the last few years as a Council member. I was told that my health was not too good and that I was down on my luck . . .

Coughlan: Sure, I wasn't at the funeral that night at all . . .

Earls: Oh, but you were, Steve, and I'll prove it. I saw you. In fact, you went into the house . . .

Coughlan: Alright so. Have it your way.

Earls: After the funeral, the next thing I knew was that you arrived at my house with two of your lap-dogs and tried to bribe me. When I rejected your bribe you then tried to make out that your reason for calling was to mark the Senate ballot papers.

Coughlan: You shouldn't say that about me, Mickey. I did too much for you.

Earls: You did nothing for me in this town, Steve. I owe you nothing . . . But I did a lot for you. I helped to get you elected to Dail Eireann. When I was President of the Transport Union and Chairman of the Dockers' Society, I canvassed the City for you and helped to put you where you are. But now, when I am no longer a yes-man for you, you are trying to discard me for one of your lap-dogs. Malone had the cheek to ask me to resign on health grounds and to write letters to the City Manager and the Mayor.

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# Striking a Blow for Irish Culture

The fourth Feile na Maighe was held at Adare during April. The theme of this year's Feile was the "Wild Geese".

The "Flight of the Earls" and the departure of the "Wild Geese", as Patrick Sarsfield's fellow exiles came to be known, was the flight of a parasitic Catholic aristocracy from Ireland. As far as the interests of Irish workers are concerned, it was a case of "good riddance to bad rubbish". But since Feile na Maighe is not organised in the interest of the working class, this fact did not emerge from the five-day festival.

Describing the event, the *Irish Times*, on April 16th, stated: "... the casual amateurism... really seemed to get out of hand. Timetables went for a Burton, projectors for illustrated lectures kept breaking down, accommodation arrangements were, to say the least of it, vague—and so on."

The star attraction of the Feile was expected to be the gala "Court of Poetry" on Saturday, April 14th. Seamus O'Conneide, who had won his way back to his old job of Press and Public Relations Officer, also filled the role of "High Sheriff" at the poetry reading. As the "Court", held at the local Christian Brothers' hall, began to fill up, the village pubs were already full with

"We're Only Here For The Beer" boys.

Meanwhile, down the road at the Methodists' hall, another event had been arranged to clash with the poetry parade. Tim Lehane, left without the benefit of a high or low sheriff, or even a chairman to introduce him, was preparing to give one of the best talks of the Feile—to about twenty people.

After over an hour's delay, the poetry and music finally got under way. The performance of a Scottish poet, named Ian Crichton Smith, in switching from Gaelic to a recently composed English "poem" (all his own work) helped to relieve attendance pressure. His stage-Irish/Scottish "work" appeared to be a half-hearted attempt to write a combined commercial for Guinness, Bord Failte and the record, "Amazing Grace". As he finally came to an end, many sufferers were seen to scurry for the door seeking relief in the nearest pub.

The only reader whose poetry was rooted in social reality was Limerick reporter/poet, Frank Hamilton. His use of the English language to write and read his poems did not go unnoticed. One Irish language bureaucrat bitterly and publicly complained about the manner in which the use of the English language was being allowed to interfere with the Feile.

As the "Court" came to an end, tension mounted. It appeared that O'Conneide had promised the musicians tea and sandwiches. The High Sheriff asserted his authority and assumed control of the delicate situation. He led another parade of musicians and an entourage of about thirty to the Village Hall, where the tea house was located. The hall was packed, and Gardai were on duty outside. People who had failed to gain admission started to dance and make merry on the village green, in the shadow of the institutionalised cultural backdrop.

To the accompaniment of the Killfenora Ceili Band, O'Conneide, flamboyantly dressed in his Sheriff's outfit of bottle-green coat and teapot-like hat, approached the steward on duty at the Village Hall. He was refused entry. "Do you know who I am," he impatiently asked. "I don't give a fuck who you are—you're not coming in here," answered the determined, little Adare man. Surrounded by musicians and followers, O'Conneide looked shocked and incredulous. He retreated briefly to allege that the steward was intoxicated, not with the cultural atmosphere, but with a more potent brew.

The crowd pressed forward to see what the High Sheriff was now going to do. The pain of his punctured pride, dignity and authority sank home. He looked wildly around. "The musicians have been playing for the past three hours and I'll see to it that they get the tea they are entitled to". Said O'Conneide. Just then, he spotted Fr. Michael Liston, C.C., Adare, on the verge of the crowd. "Are you going to stand by me," demanded O'Conneide, "you promised the tea." He then sought the support of two other Committee members but to no avail.

The maddened O'Conneide had his position and reputation to defend. Like a wounded and panic-stricken animal he lunged forward and struck out wildly with one, two and a third, final blow for Irish cultural freedom... and the beleaguered tea and sandwiches.

The blow landed, not, as many expected, on the implacable doorman, but on one of O'Conneide's fellow-Committee members.

But the story did not end there. A sequel remained to be acted out in the Dunraven Arms Hotel, where many of the Feile personalities were staying. Pressmen hovering around were dramatically summoned to attend an emergency press conference called by O'Conneide. It later emerged that the High Sheriff was to sue the Feile for £50 damages.

And outside the still-thirsty musicians, poets and cam-followers traipsed the seeking succor. But by this time all the pubs were closed... and the Dunraven Arms Hotel had failed to apply for a licence extension.

But the evening's entertainment had not yet run its course. At around half past three on Sunday morning, the hapless O'Conneide lost another friend. While he was trying to arrange lifts to Limerick, a tall, wild-eyed "culture" monger dashed out of the hotel after him.

"Come back, I want to talk to you," called the wild-eyed man.

"Go away and leave me alone," came the retort.

"I'll never talk to you again," shouted the wild-eyed man as he rushed after O'Conneide into the Adare night.

And so the highlight of the Feile came to a panting end. The Gaelic Leaguers, the Scottish poets, the musicians and the "cultural" beer boys—the washed up "Wild Geese" of the seventies—had had their cultural injection. Their noisy cries grew faint. Peace and tranquility returned to the sweet, sleepy village.

(continued from page 5)

**Lipper:** I see no reason to doubt Mickey in his statements. The story rings true to me. Anyway, how could Malone have known about the need to send the two letters, one to the City Manager and the other to the Mayor? No ordinary person would know how to go about resigning a Council seat, and it is obvious that Malone was well primed. You, Steve, were the instigator of all this. Surely nobody would believe that the three of you arrived at the house of Councillor Earls at the same time on the very same night. This marking of the Senate papers was only a blind. Nobody could swallow this tale. In any case, Steve, if you called to advise Mickey Earls on how to vote, how come you never called on Frank Leddin and myself to advise us? And what had the other two to do with the Senate Elections?

**Coughlan:** Keep out of this you, Mick.

**Earls:** Lipper is right in what he said.

**Coughlan:** Look, Mickey, I called to see your wife and I explained to her my reason for visiting you on that occasion...

**Earls:** Keep my wife out of it. You have caused enough domestic problems in my house with your interference.

**Lipper:** That's true. I can confirm that. When I brought Tim McAuliffe to the home of Councillor Earls, Mrs. Earls told him the whole story in my presence. Tim McAuliffe said that the thing was a shocking act and that Mrs. Earls was a very distressed woman after the incident.

**Coughlan:** I lost too much money over politics and this isn't fair to me. If this story gets out, it'll do me a lot of damage.

**Lipper:** What about the damage to Mickey Earls? This is American-type corruption. I abhor this action and it should never have happened. I know, of course, Steve, that you're in politics through skulduggery and chicanery. Isn't gambling your profession? Didn't you lose your bookie offices over the same game?

**Coughlan:** That'll do you. You tried to oust me

from my Dail seat on two occasions and I destroyed you. The people of Limerick gave you your answer...

**Lipper:** Bluff will get you nowhere. You tried to organise the whole sordid scheme and it backfired on you. You wouldn't organise a brothel in the middle of Paris...

**Coughlan:** Sour grapes. The people gave you your answer...

**Earls:** Give it over. Don't try to take it out on Mick Lipper...

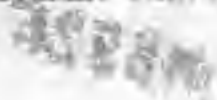
**Coughlan:** You can't talk, Mickey. You went around the town and made a show of me. You went into pubs asking the publicans if I had left any envelopes for you. When the publicans said "no", you said: "Give me a few quid and Steve will be in later on to fix up with you."

**Earls:** This shouldn't have come up at all tonight. This has nothing whatever to do with the bribe. You're only bluffing now, Steve and trying to intimidate me. But I'll make you prove that statement. You can take me to any publican you like that made that statement and I'll make him prove it. These incidents didn't happen like that at all. I value my reputation and I intend to continue my work for the people of Ballynanty and Killeely who elected me. None of your little lap-dogs will slip into my Council seat through the back-door. I'm not for sale, Steve. A thousand pounds wouldn't buy me—not to mind your paltry twenty-five pounds.

**Lipper:** O'Neill will never come into the City Council on a co-option. If he wants a seat, let him go before the public at the next Local Elections and earn his place.

## EPILOGUE:

The three Labour Party public representatives reached the junction of O'Connell Street and William Street. The tumult of the shouting died down... The time and place for the parting of their ways home had come. The three City Fathers walked slowly and separately into the Limerick night...



ECHOES FROM

— THE —

# BOTTOM DOG

"We must look at life in all its aspects from the point of view of the "Bottom Dog"—the oppressed—be it nation, class, or sex."

Vol. 1. No. 3

3rd November 1917

Price 4d.

## LOCAL TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES

Last week we referred to the pressing need of organisation. Skilled workers who belong to their respective Trade Unions know full well what a tower of strength their Unions are to them—how their lot has been bettered and the status made secure against all attack. Unfortunately one class of worker, the unskilled and the semi-skilled man or woman, is practically only now waking up and commencing to realise that his or her only hope of advancement lies in Trade Unionism. The ordinary labourer has been down in the dust simply for want of unity and organisation. Within the past month a much-needed move has been made to effectively organize the latter class of worker in Limerick and . . . as a result, big strides have been made by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. . . The Union has also taken in hand the organising of the women, who, to say the least of it, are as a whole paid an un-Christian low wage for a working week of over-long hours. The girls at the Shannon Laundry have had their weekly wages increased by 1/6 and 1/-. A big meeting of women and girls working at Messrs. Cleeves, Lansdowne, was held under the auspices of the Transport Union on Thursday night week and the following evening these workers, numbering between 300 and 500, got 2/6 each increase. So, the good work goes merrily on. When every worker—male and female—is thoroughly organised, then the Bottom Dog hopes to come into his own.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CONCERNING CANNOCKS

While on the prowl last week the B.D. went up O'Connell Street to see what time it was by Cannock's Clock. He learned the time as well as some interesting information concerning the owners of the clock. He is not surprised now on hearing that Cannock's are able to pay a nine per cent dividend. Where does it come from? Listen to this and then put on your thinking cap: Cannock's employ thirty girls in their dressmaking Department and the weekly wages of these thirty girls comes to the magnificent total of eight pounds per week! £8 between 30; rather should it be £30 between 8. One of these thirty girl workers is fourteen years with the firm and all she has is seven shillings a week!

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE BOYS AT BOYD'S

The B.D. asked for a bone from one of the above, but the reply was in the negative, as he was told bones—even backbones—were out of the question on 18/- a week. These workers have only 18/- and 20/- a week. They get a bonus, intended to be taken off after the war. It is paid then in a separate envelope marked "war bonds" in red ink, the colour symbolic of the blood of workers shed in a world conflict to amass wealth and territory for the idle rich.

\* \* \* \* \*

Vol. 1. No. 4

10th November 1917

Price 4d.

## THE HOUSING PROBLEM

As the Bottom Dog knows full well the worker's lot is not a happy one. He has to work long hours for low wages and has to house himself and his family in "houses" and surroundings a disgrace to civilization. And we need not go outside our own city to prove this. We will content ourselves

at the moment with the figures given in the 1915 Report of the Medical Officer of Health (Dr. McGrath). From it we find there are 1,669 houses unfit for human habitation in the city, 692 owing to dilapidated condition and 977 owing to want of ordinary sanitary accommodation. According to the same authority 681 should be closed up absolutely. From statistics available it is proved that with the exception of the poor of Dublin, the Limerick poor are the worst housed people of the large cities of Ireland. . . Time has shown us that the wealthy, to which the slum owner and the sweater belong, will not do anything to remedy this shameful state of affairs under which the working class is forced to exist, (not live, as they can't be said to "live"). It is only for the workers themselves to do what they can in the matter. It is therefore with much pleasure we learn that at a Conference in the Mechanics' Institute on Sunday last, composed of representatives of the Limerick Trades Council, the Federated Labour Council, the Town Tenants' Association and the Plot-Holders' Association, the subject was fairly fully dealt with and steps taken to form a Committee from the bodies to formulate a scheme for better housing for Limerick workers.

\* \* \* \* \*

## LIMERICK LABOUR RALLY

We wish every success to the public meeting to be held in the City on tomorrow (Sunday). Though primarily intended for unskilled and semi-skilled workers it will have a special interest too for skilled workers, because it is only by organising every available worker—man, woman, boy and girl—that it can ever be hoped to better their lot and give them an opportunity of obtaining a decent living. In most instances the wages paid in the City are a veritable disgrace alike to the employers directly responsible and those other professing energetic citizens who prate so much about having the welfare of the City at heart. It is about time surely that we got rid of cant and humbug and got down to business. We, workers, must realise that our one sure means of salvation from our present unenviable condition lies in our own solidarity; we can only expect help from our own class. We will get nothing by fawning and acting the slave—the cap-in-hand, "Please your Honour" attitude. We have had an overdose of this in Ireland.

\* \* \* \* \*

## A CHANGE OF PLAN

He'd read all the dope on attending to work;  
And toiling to suit your employer;  
He knew that to loaf or to shirk  
Was quite an ambition destroyer  
So he plunged into work with a zest and a vim,  
And he did more than double his share of it;  
He needed a raise, for his wages were slim,  
But he knew that the boss would take care of it!

For hadn't the books made this simple fact plain—  
The people would recognise talent;  
That if you would work with your might and your main  
The boss, with a manner most gallant,  
Would give you a raise, though you said not a word,  
To show you were worthy of credit;  
So he toiled and he sweated, but nothing occurred, . . .  
And life didn't go as he read it!

The boss was aware of his merit, all right,  
But he said, "Why the deuce should I raise him  
So long as he's willing to work day and night  
For what his position now pays him?"  
But, weary with waiting, the worker grew wise!  
He said to himself, "Why, dod rot it!  
These books on success are a bundle of lies!"  
So he struck for a raise—and he got it!

By Burton Braley.

D 43926

## GOD HELP HER

By J. F. O'Donnell

"Gemma was not more than two months, I think, over six years old when she went out. She said: 'Mother, I want some boots to go to school'; so I sent her out and saved up what she earned until it was time enough to get them. She was a corpse from going in the mumps. She came home from work one day when about ten and a half years old, with dizziness and her bones aching, and died, and was buried in little better than a fortnight"—*Evidence of a Mother before the Children's Employment Commission in reference to Agricultural Gangs.*

I heard the first wail, incoherent  
Of one in her need—  
Heard the cry of a heart too much broken  
By torture to bleed,  
For the red joyous blood had abandoned  
The core where it leapt,  
Ere the little child grown to a woman,  
Knew sorrow, and wept—  
Knew sorrow and with it bereavement,  
The cot's narrow space,  
Framing round the ghastruin of childhood  
Stiff limbs, pallid face;  
The mouth shrivelled up and half open,  
The hair's ebon stream;  
Lids drooping their night-waves of lashes  
Like one in a dream.

II  
Six years—only six! yet she laboured  
In silence and pain  
Bore the blaze of the dizzying sunshine,  
The brunt of the rain.  
Reeling feet trod the sharp biting stubble,  
Ay, trod till they bled.  
And her hands, as they fought with the thistles  
As the poppies were red,  
Toiling hard without tear, without murmur,  
The little thing went,  
Till her brain in the struggle grew weary,  
Her courage was spent.  
Was chased like a beast by the hunter  
From the home to the wild.  
From the sweetness of kisses, embraces,  
The nameless drew grace,  
The light and the peace of the household,  
Where face meeting face,  
Create the pure intercommunion  
Which the world cannot give—  
Create the most precious assurance:  
'Tis something to live.

## THE MONTH'S MIND

## THE PALACE REVOLUTION

Limerick Gardai were called out in force last night to control a full scale riot in the North Circular Road. A Sergeant and two Guards were injured in the disturbances, which occurred near the posh residence of the Bishop.

The trouble began shortly before seven o'clock when a frantic phone call from the Bishop was received at William Street Garda Station.

When the Sergeant on his bicycle arrived at the scene, a dozen nuns from the Salesian Convent were making petrol bombs on Cleaves' Bank while a crowd of about 200 priests surrounded the Bishop's Palace.

The Sergeant decided not to intervene in clerical matters and knelt down to pray for peace while around him boots were flying and priests shouting: "We are mods . . . we want records . . ."

Inside the lush grounds of the imposing house an amazing scene was in progress as dozens of priests and nuns held hands and danced through the orchard singing: "Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Old Oak Tree."

"Hey . . . dis is groovy man . . . I got Radio Luxembourg," said an excited cleric as he announced to the rioting mob: "I sure like this new culture."

Meanwhile frantic phone calls were being dispatched from the besieged Bishop and the new multi-coloured Patrol Car was immediately dispatched from the Dock Road. When it came near the danger area, the praying policeman, began to roar: "How dare ye . . . go in an' bring out the black one . . . have ye no respect for his Lordship and him in there burning his brains analysing the new culture?"

Urgent calls were made to the Director of the Confraternity to quell the disgraceful disturbance. "After all," explained the Bishop's secretary, "he had great experience keeping the workers in their place."

The *Catholic Standard* got hold of the news story and immediately dispatched by helicopter Mr. John Feeney, who wrote a moving piece on the Bishop's plight. "He had been attacked because he spoke the truth," said Feeney adding that he was sure it was a subversive plot to undermine the power of the Catholic Church in Limerick life.

R.T.E. sent a "7 Days" team to the scene but the Bishop refused to talk. "Who do you think I am," he asked, "that fellow James Good?"

Asked to comment on the outbreak, which totally surprised the city, Fr. Good said it was understandable. "For too long all we have given our priests is a lot of books . . . and as we all know

books are not human. It was a natural reaction against clerical authority that they should react in this manner," he said in a radio interview.

There was an immediate demand for the resignation of Fr. Good, and the Bishop secretly threatened to take away his power of speech. "That alleged cleric," some-one wrote to the *Irish Times*, "why doesn't he admit he's a Red in disgrace."

Ald. Steve Coughlan in an appeal to the mob asked for tolerance, and divine intervention on behalf of the majority of the fair-minded people in Limerick. "I was talking to Himself yesterday and He assured me He would do everything possible, and would leave no Diocese unturned in search of a solution."

"'Tis the seed that was planted here be them Maoists . . . now 'tis taking fruit . . . but when I warned about this . . . I was called a Jew-baiter," he said.

Finally, as Gardai were rushed in from Mayorstone and Kildimo, the short-lived protest broke up when R.T.E. announced a new programme starring Bunny Carr. "We all love Bunny," said a nun, smoothing out the creases in her habit.

Meanwhile it is thought that no charges will be brought against the protesters. "Half of them were from Maynooth, and we know what that place is like," said the Bishop's secretary.

The Bishop has retired to Kerry, at the invitation of his friend Eamonn, to try and discover what he said wrong at the Vocational Teachers' Congress in Limerick. "He has been rushed off his feet recently," said his Secretary, "and he badly needs a rest to build himself up."

## CRUMPET CITY

"One thing is certain. If cleanliness is next to Godliness, then I think Limerick would justly merit the title—Ungodly City!"

(*Vincent Moran (Jr.) Limerick Weekly Echo*  
28/4/73)

## WORKERS' "LOCO" MOTION

"He paid a tribute to Mr. Kevin Daly, Mr. Dan Duggan, personell manager; locomotive superintendent, Mr. Pat Hyland and Mr. Tony O'Connor, area operations manager, whose responsibilities required initiative, energy and most of all, full support of all the employees in the area. In this I can assure them of the full loyalty of the Locomen's Association.

(*Ald. M. Lipper, Acting Chairman, Limerick Locomotivemen's Association, Limerick Leader*  
28/4/73)

III  
'Tis come, the supreme consummation,  
The Merciful Death  
Just stood at the desolate bedside;  
Said "Hush" to her breath.  
How quiet she lies in the coffin!  
How thin her hair's gold!  
She looks—she was ten years last birthday—  
Full twenty years old.  
Weep, woman in, agonised silence,  
Till tears make you blind;  
Till they look on your voiceless bereavement,  
And call you resigned.  
The coffin, the shroud of the pauper,  
The spiritless clay,  
Are dues fo<sup>3</sup> the voice, the embrace  
That should comfort to-day.  
Yes, here in the heart of "Free England"  
The Murder was done—  
The slow loathsome murder of System  
That rots in the sun.  
Not the bloodshed of fair open strife,  
Foot to foot, blow for blow;  
When a man cleaves his enemy's forehead,  
And stamps down a foe.  
Not this; but unholy conspirings,  
By legalised arts,  
To age the fair tresses of childhood,  
To break little hearts.

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